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Juvenile Drug Court Holds First Commencement Ceremony

The O'ahu Family Court held its first commencement ceremony today in the Supreme Court courtroom for eight juveniles who successfully completed all requirements for the Hawai'i Juvenile Drug Court Program.

The Juvenile Drug Court, a minimum eight-month treatment-based program for substance abusing, nonviolent juveniles under 18 years of age, was launched in August 2001. Eligible participants in the Juvenile Drug Court program must be 12 to 17 years of age; referred to the Family Court for nonviolent law violation; must have a current pattern of substance abuse and not have a history of sex offenses; and must live on O'ahu and be under the jurisdiction of the Family Court, First Judicial Circuit.

Referrals are made from Family Court, prosecutor and public defender's offices, the Honolulu Police Department, Department of Health, and other agencies. From referrals received during the inaugural year, Juvenile Drug Court officials accepted 41 juveniles into the program.

A juvenile must have the support of an adult who agrees to participate in Juvenile Drug Court activities. These activities include frequent hearings, drug testing, individualized drug treatment programs, family counseling, use of graduated sanctions and incentives, and direct contact with the presiding judge of the Juvenile Drug Court.

The presiding judge of the Juvenile Drug Court is Family Court Judge Karen Radius of the First Judicial Circuit (O'ahu). "As I said when we launched the program last year, our guiding principle is that adolescents have a right to effective treatment," she said. "We're committed to proving proper treatment for young people involved in the juvenile justice system to facilitate their return to mainstream society."

The Juvenile Drug Court was made possible through grants from the U.S. Department of Justice's Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Program, the federal government's Drug Courts Program Office, and the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant Program.

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